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SUBJECT: DIYALA PRT: IDPS CONTINUE TO FACE
SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Diyala PRT reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: Management challenges continue to constrain the Diyala provincial government's capacity to address issues confronting the estimated 52,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in Diyala. Housing, education, health, and employment for IDPs remain major areas of concern. A recently established provincial level working committee is beginning to show signs of progress; however, much work remains to be done to strengthen policies governing voting rights, registration, identification, ration card issuance, and access to the public distribution system. Other identified areas for improvement include a need for additional NGOs that provide assistance to IDPs and improved coordination between existing organizations. The PRT, using new data from an August 2007 survey by NGO Mercy Corps, is helping the provincial government to synchronize efforts with GOI ministries to improve existing conditions for IDPs. End Summary.

IDPs in Diyala

[1](#)3. (U) Diyala Province has a protracted history of displacement over the last four decades, mostly the product of war and Saddam Hussein's regime. The Iraq Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) estimates that about 12,000 displaced families live in Diyala province. According to MoDM, significant numbers were displaced between the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and the first bombing of the Shia Samarra mosque in Salah ad Din Province in February 2006. MoDM estimates that following the bombing, 440 families or 70 percent were displaced as a result of the widespread sectarian violence that ensued. Using the NGO Mercy Corps' figure for average family size in Diyala (4.3 persons/family), PRT estimates there are currently 51,600 displaced persons in Diyala province, and that 36,292 of these were displaced post February [1](#)2006. According to Mercy Corps' historical analysis, IDP families relocated to Diyala due to religious, political or ethnic discrimination, and the overall deterioration of security within Iraq.

[1](#)4. (U) Diyala province is a mixed society of Sunni, Shia, Kurds, Turkomen, Assyrians, and other minority groups. Sunnis are the majority sect, and 77 percent of IDPs are Sunni. Most IDP families in Diyala come from Baghdad (78 percent), Babil (five percent), Wasit (four percent) and Anbar (three percent) provinces. Interestingly, eight percent of families are displaced from within Diyala. The Mercy Corps survey determined that while the rate of displacement has slowed in 2007, compared to 2006, a higher number of families have already been displaced in 2007 as compared to 2005. In terms of demographics, the survey revealed that almost all of Diyala's IDPs are Arab (98 percent), Kurds make up one percent and other minority groups make up less than one percent. Seventy-seven percent of the families are Sunni and 23 percent are Shia, with the vast majority of the Shia families located in al-Muqadadiya, Baquba, and Balad Ruz. With provincial elections on the horizon, it is significant that 51 percent of the IDP population is under the age

of 20. Forty-four percent of the IDPs are female, and 76 percent are single.

Current IDP Issues

15. (U) Diyala IDPs continue to experience significant problems with housing, education, health, and employment services. To begin to address these problems, the provincial government has named Assistant Governor Imad Jaleel Abdullah to oversee all IDP issues. Other limited services available to IDPs include the MoDM, which maintains an office in Baqubah headed by Director General (DG) Gazwan Mujeeb with a staff of five. DG Mujeeb works closely with the PRT and Coalition Forces (CF) on IDP issues. However, he and his staff are severely constrained by limited resources, which inhibit his ability to travel to and identify IDP locations.

Tense Working Relationship with NGOs

16. (SBU) There is a tense relationship between DG Mujeeb and Mercy Corps, which currently works only in the Malik Shah Camp in Khanagin, northern Diyala, where it has provided invaluable assistance in the areas of education, health and the creation of permanent homes, working through local governments. However, Mercy Corps refuses to work with DG Mujeeb, claiming he has no authority over the organization. DG Mujeeb disagrees, claiming that he is in possession of a memorandum from the MoDM, which states that all NGOs in the province are required to work with the DG. However, he has been unable to produce the memo. Other organizations working in the region on IDP issues include the Iraqi Red Crescent, but the quality of its assistance is unknown. There also are reports that the Red Crescent only provides aid to certain groups, and that these groups are not always the ones in greatest need. A Danish NGO, with a

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focus on cattle breeding, is known to be working in the town of Baqubah. No other NGOs are known to be actively working with IDPs in Diyala.

IDP Housing

17. (U) According to Mercy Corps, 92 percent of the IDPs live in rented houses or flats (83 percent in urban settings), while five percent live in tents or other informal housing. PRT discussions with DG Mujeeb and visits to IDP areas confirm that multiple families are housed in small, single family dwellings, placing enormous strains on already scarce resources such as food, sewage and water. The Mercy Corps study calculated that only 83 percent of families have the means to purchase trucked or tanker water, while seven percent access water from wells. Ninety-seven percent of the IDP families have access to varying amounts of power from the main electric network system, but over 30 percent are without adequate sewage systems. The combination of these factors has created significant health concerns for IDPs.

Limited Health Care Options for IDPs

18. (U) Many health practitioners in the province have departed due to fear for their personal safety from militias and insurgents. Medical supplies are in short supply at provincial hospitals and clinics. Currently, there are nine hospitals and 75 Ministry of Health clinics in Diyala; however, Mercy Corps reports that 91 percent of IDP families do not know the location of the nearest public hospital or clinic. Mercy Corps notes that roughly three percent of IDPs suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes, anemia, high blood pressure, stomach diseases, and heart disease. The combination of long distances to medical facilities, medical supply shortages at medical facilities, and limited means for transport denies medical treatment to many of the chronically ill and children of IDPs.

Education Prospects Slightly Brighter for IDPs

¶9. (U) Mercy Corps reports that 48 percent of the IDP population over 10 years of age does not attend secondary school, and that the majority of families (68 percent) travel 1-3 kilometers to the nearest primary school. The Provincial Council (PC) has an active Education Committee, which has made the education of IDP children, particularly those in the northern areas, a primary focus. As most of the female members of this four member committee are from Khanqin, in the north, this focus is likely to continue. They have, in the last month, successfully approached the Ministry of Education to produce a letter that allows IDP children in the Khanqin area to be accepted into the schools, regardless of their places of origin. The Committee has worked with communities to renovate at least one school in the Khanqin area for use by IDP children. Assistant Governor Imad has been receptive to suggestions from the PRT that he work with the DG of Education to ensure that IDP children are registered for schools.

Employment, Social Safety Network,
and Compensation Payments

¶10. (U) According to Mercy Corps, nearly half (48 percent) of IDPs over 15 years of age are unemployed, and the majority of IDP households (93 percent) earn less than USD 120 per month. There is a proposal for consideration by the GOI for an IDP center in Baqubah for counseling and job placement. Assistant Governor Imad has begun establishing offices in each local government to handle social safety net matters.

¶11. (U) Mercy Corps reports efforts continue to set up meetings with the ministries of Social Affairs and Migration to locate funds that the disabled had been receiving as recently as six months ago. The plan is to set up an office in each local government center and authorize staff hiring for the social safety net. Efforts are also being made to collect USD 30 million promised to Diyala's reconstruction efforts by the Prime Minister, so that funds and easy loans can be allocated to IDP families. The MoDM has authorized the hiring of ten persons, even though a meeting of the DG of Migration, the DG of Social Safety net and the Deputy DG of Retirement in late August 2007 confirmed that the migration budget is often so limited that the GOI is unable to pay the entire year's salary to employees.

¶12. (U) Currently, each IDP must obtain a returnee certificate from the Mayor and Iraq Police from the area they are trying to depart, in addition to a ration card and ID, in order to be added to the database that will allow them to receive compensation when it has been approved. According to Mercy Corps, compensation payments to IDPs are being stymied by poorly organized databases. The Diyala database has not been updated for many years, and it appears that an

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unknown number of persons are duplicated on various lists. The MoDM claims that 12,000 Diyala families are eligible for compensation of Iraqi Dinar (IQD) 150,000 (USD 122) for six months, to help them to return to their homes. However, outdated and incomplete IDP lists have slowed compensation payouts. An efficient system for registering new IDPs and a method of disbursement (checks, cash from the bank, cash delivered at the local government center) of payments are also needed.

¶13. (U) The Mercy Corps report states there are significant food distribution challenges for IDPs. DG Mujeeb of MoDM says he can sign up IDPs for ration cards, but they have to individually sign for the ID cards, since they have various origins. The current system for the allocation of ID cards to IDPs is in disrepair. DG Mujeeb claims that limited resources do not allow him to visit IDP areas; in addition to transportation issues, IDPs without IDs are afraid to risk the various checkpoints to get to Baqubah to apply for their ID cards. These conditions have led to the failure of IDP families to register, preventing access to ration and ID cards. Without ration and ID cards, IDPs cannot access the PDS leading to malnutrition, ill health, an inability to seek work, or travel to register.

¶14. (U) Voting remains a challenge for IDPs, according to the Mercy Corps report. A provision for voter ID cards is fast becoming a critical concern and need within the province. A federal system, authorizing IDPs to vote in the provinces in which they currently reside, could help prevent disenfranchisement in upcoming elections for many IDPs who remain fearful of returning to their homes. Currently, each province is responsible for developing voting policies for IDPs. The Diyala PC has yet to determine its IDP voting policy. PRT Diyala is pressing the PC to address this issue.

Comment

¶15. (SBU) The IDP situation in Diyala continues to be characterized by poor administration, weak and ineffective policies, inadequate resources, and poor coordination between the federal, provincial, and local levels of government. An additional concern is the lack of an IDP voting policy, which must be addressed given the likelihood of national and provincial elections in the near future. The PRT will continue to work with the provincial government to address IDP issues and seek to improve the conditions under which IDPs must live. PRT will also work to identify NGOs working on IDP issues and continue to push for an active IDP working committee at the level of the Assistant Governor for Humanitarian Affairs. End Comment.

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